

Cuba—The Liberal Offer to Spain.

We begin to get at the facts about the negotiations that are going on between the United States and Spain for the independence of Cuba. Our special despatch from Washington, published yesterday, informs us of the terms proposed by General Sickles to the Spanish government, the acceptance of the mediation of the United States, the modified proposition submitted by Spain in lieu of that of our government, and the state of the question up to the latest advices.

The proposition of the United States is direct to the point, and begins by stating that "the Spanish government is to acknowledge the independence of Cuba without conditions." That is the first step and the condition precedent of those that follow. The Cubans are to indemnify Spain for the Spanish property on the island, such as castles, arsenals, forts, custom houses and other public buildings. The aggregate amount of indemnification, however, is not to exceed a hundred million of dollars. Slavery is to be abolished. As soon as these terms are accepted by both parties hostilities are to cease, and the United States will guarantee the fulfilment of the agreement. The Spanish government, after stating that it accepted the mediation of the United States, and thanking our government for its friendly interposition, proposes, first, that the Cubans shall lay down their arms; second, that Spain will grant a general amnesty to the insurgents; third, that Cuba shall pay Spain for all Spanish property on the island and for all property destroyed by the insurgents; fourth, that suffrage is to be granted to all the population, so that the people may decide by vote whether they will remain with Spain or be separate and independent; fifth, that Spain will guarantee full protection to such of the insurgents as may be selected to pass through the lines of the Spanish army for the purpose of treating for a settlement on the basis of these propositions; and sixth, the United States to guarantee to Spain the payment of Cuba's proportion of the public debt.

There is seemingly a wide difference between the proposals of the two governments, but both have the same object in view—the independence of Cuba. That of the United States, as was said before, is concise and direct to the point. The Spanish government, though having the same end in view, appears anxious to save its *amour propre*, and not to wound the pride of Spaniards in the mode of parting with Cuba. Hence, the first proposition is that the insurgents shall lay down their arms, while that of our own government is that the independence of Cuba shall be acknowledged. Of course, if the other conditions can be agreed upon the independence of Cuba will be secured, whether that be ceded as the condition precedent or not, for Spain would not and could not go back upon the Cubans after they should lay down their arms for the purpose of a settlement negotiated by the United States. Still, the best, simplest and most direct plan is that proposed by our government.

But the proposal of the Spanish government that the Cubans shall pay for all the property of loyal Spaniards destroyed in the war, and that the United States shall guarantee to Spain the payment of what is termed Cuba's proportion of the debt of Spain, cannot be admitted. This would involve, probably, the payment of several hundred millions, and create endless trouble and difficulties. The United States will certainly not agree to any such proposition. The round sum of a hundred millions for the payment of all Spanish property on the island and as a final settlement of all claims growing out of the war, is a very liberal offer. Neither our government nor the Cubans ought to offer more, and, judging from the tenor of our Washington despatch, we conclude no more will be offered. It is simply a question with the Spanish government whether it will take this or get nothing, besides losing vast sums of money in the hopeless attempt to hold Cuba. Spain cannot hold the island long, and, therefore, it would be extreme folly to reject the very liberal sum of a hundred millions now offered on the guarantee of the United States.

By the latest advices from Madrid it appears that the Regent Serrano and a majority of his Cabinet have become convinced that the wisest and best thing to do is to accept this offer, but are rather afraid to venture on concluding the bargain before the Spanish people become undeceived and instructed as to the real state of affairs in Cuba. But a great point has been gained by the government consenting to negotiate for the independence of the island. The first and most formidable barrier is broken down. There seems to be little doubt now that the independence of Cuba, through the prudent and earnest interposition of the United States, will be conceded. Let us hope this may be accomplished soon and before that beautiful and fruitful island becomes devastated. To prolong the war, under the present state of things and the prospect of a settlement, would be shedding blood uselessly and recklessly.